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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive report provides current information on the status of school age child care in Florida, an overview of Florida Statutes, a summary of benefits and problems with state involvement, and recommendations for action. An estimated 138,000 children ages 5 to 13 in Florida may be without care every day after school. Florida's school districts are attempting to meet their needs by developing after school programs through community schools and by contracting with local children's service organizations. Districts report needing help with transportation, funds for providing service to Title XX and other low-income students, start-up funds, and information services. Topics covered in the report include the following: national concerns for latchkey children, effects of self-care on children, Florida statutes, the extent of local school district involvement, three models of program delivery, descriptions of present programs, financial support for programs, and recommendations for state policymakers. In addition, tables and figures provide information on (1) school districts reporting school-age child care programs for the 1984-85 school year and (2) a summary of services provided by school districts. Relevant Florida statutes on use of school buildings, leasing of school facilities, community education, school transportation, and child care facilities are reviewed in the appendix. (DST)

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THE STATUS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE IN FLORIDA

AN OVERSIGHT REPORT PREPARED FOR THE EDUCATION K-12 COMMITTEE

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SUMMARY

School-age child care is any program formally designed and organized to provide supervision and care for children during those days and hours school is not in session, including before school, after school, and during vacations. Public and private analysts have no precise idea of the actual number of children who need care after school. Nationally, guesses range from a low of 1.8 million to a high of 7 million children without care or supervision after school.

In Florida it is estimated that 138,000 children in Florida may be without care everyday after school. Florida's school districts are attempting to meet this need by developing after-school programs through community schools and by contracting with local children's service organizations. Of the 100 school-age child care programs run by school districts in the nation, Florida has at least nineteen. These nineteen district programs are serving at least 21,736 children using three program models which respond to local needs and resources. However, the established programs are meeting only a small portion of the demand which is projected to grow rapidly between now and 1990. Districts report needing help with transportation, funds for providing service to Title XX

and other low-income students, start-up funds, and information services.

Recommendations for State action include:

. . continuing to endorse a diversity of program models and local options

. . addressing the licensing issue

. . establishing a School-Age Child Care Information Exchange or Clearinghouse to provide leadership, assistance, and monitoring services to school-age child care programs and interested communities, including providing information, technical assistance, and guidelines

. . studying the possibilities of providing start-up funds for programs, alternative methods of funding care for low and low-middle income children, and transportation.

AN OVERSIGHT REPORT PREPARED FOR THE EDUCATION, K-12 COMMITTEE

THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

I. INTRODUCTION

Concern is growing in Florida and around the nation regarding the plight of increasing numbers of school-age children who have no adult care or supervision during nonschool hours of the day. These children are often called "latchkey" children -- a reference to the keys often worn on strings around their necks which they use to unlock their empty houses when they come home after school.

School-age child care is any program formally designed and organized to provide supervision and care for children during those days and hours school is not in session, including before school, after school, and during vacations. Usually, these programs involve children from ages 5 to 10, although some older children between ages 11 and 13 also attend programs with components designed especially for them.

School-age child care programs are not designed to replace the family or the school, but rather to compliment and support both. Good programs combine the best features of child care, education, and recreation. Children who might otherwise spend valuable afternoon hours alone watching television, in an inappropriate preschool center, or in less than safe

circumstances in their neighborhood get an opportunity to learn new skills, play with friends, and develop interests in special areas such as music, art, sports, dramatics, and literature.

Good programs provide a continuity and dependability all children need. They are not interrupted, as more informal care is, if a neighbor, friend, or relative is ill or not available. The program is always there for children to depend on. They know that when school is over they have something to look forward to with anticipation -- something more than a long bus ride or walk home to an empty house.

It is reported by the National School Board Association (1981) that slightly more than 100 of the 15,000 public school systems in the United States currently provide school-age child care for their students. However, in Florida, no information presently exists in an easily retrievable form regarding the availability of or the demand for school-age child care. The purpose of this report is to provide up-to-date information on the status of school-age child care in Florida and the nation. The report includes information on school-age child care in the United States, the results of a survey of all 67 Florida school districts regarding school involvement in school-age child care, an overview of Florida Statutes relating to the topic, a summary of benefits and problems regarding state involvement, and recommendations for possible action.

II. SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE: A NATIONAL CONCERN

Public and private analysts have no precise idea of the actual size of the "latchkey" population. Nationally, guesses range from a low of 1.8 million to a high of 7 million children without care or supervision after school. The Children's Defense Fund estimates that in 1982 almost half of the 13 million children under 13 whose mothers were employed full-time may have gone without care. The recent ABC-TV documentary, "To Save Our Schools", stated that probably one fourth of all elementary students in the country had no planned care during the after school hours.

Of course, not all children whose parents work are latchkey children, even when there are no structured school-age child care programs available in the community. Most parents do what they can to avoid leaving their children unsupervised: paying prices they can't afford for babysitters, taking a lower-paying job simply because the hours fit better with their children's schedules, sending the children to private day care centers with programs appropriate for preschoolers but not for older children, or even staying home when they really need to work. Many parents, who would not under any circumstances leave their children unattended, actively support the idea of good school-age child care programs because they feel this would be the best solution both for their children's

development and for their own "peace of mind". ("School-Age Child Care In New York State: Cooperative Strategies for Solving the Problem of Latchkey Children", 1984, New York State Council on Children and Families.)

The need for school-age child care is projected to expand even further in the future due to changes in life style and increases in the number of young children. According to the Census Bureau, the population of children who are now aged 5 and under and who will soon be school age jumped 9 percent between 1980 and 1983, with the current population of 17,826,000 toddlers the highest in 15 years. The toddler boom is attributed to the present large number of women in their prime childbearing years. Demographic projections show the number of young children increasing 14 percent or 4.8 million during the decade of the 1980's. Besides these projected increases in young children and the expected growth in the number of working mothers and single parent families, the situation is further exacerbated by another population trend -- the decrease in percentage of children ages 10 to 18 compared to the increase of children under 6. This results in an increasing population of young school-age children with a decreasing number of teenage siblings available to provide after school baby sitting.

What is known about the effects of self-care on children?

The United States Census reports accidents as the leading cause of death among children of elementary school age. The unsupervised youngster can find home a very dangerous place, and children in self-care are more likely to be victims of a wide variety of accidents. In 1981, U.S. News and World Report stated that one in six calls received by the Newark, New Jersey, fire department involved a child or children alone at home. Many children lack the judgement to deal with crises that arise or the experience to prevent minor accidents (such as small fires) from becoming tragedies.

Interviews with unsupervised children in the National Survey of Children conducted by Temple University in 1976, have revealed that many of these children experience feelings of overwhelming loneliness and fear. Children cope with their fears in many ways - by hiding; by playing the TV loudly to distract themselves, drown out frightening noises, or warn intruders that someone is home; by calling their parents frequently; and by turning on all the lights.

Many law enforcement officials have become concerned with the possibility of increased delinquency among unsupervised children. The 1981 FBI Uniform Crime Reports for the United States reported that more than 25,000 children under the age of 10 were arrested for participation in serious crime,

including theft, vandalism, and crimes of violence. Research (Finkelhor, 1979) also warns that many of these children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation by adults who realize they are unsupervised. In addition, truancy among children left to get to school in the morning by themselves is an increasing trend. (Clark, 1984).

According to the American Bar Association, situations where young children are left at home alone during the day also result in the involvement of the state's child protective service agencies, with families sometimes brought before the court for alleged "child neglect". Of all the confirmed cases of child maltreatment nationally, the largest single category (over one quarter of all child abuse and neglect cases) is "lack of supervision". Many of these children are reported as being locked alone in their homes. According to the 1982 child abuse and neglect case data from the American Humane Association, 36 percent of the children involved in lack of supervision cases are 6 to 11 years old and often latchkey children. Significantly, unlike other forms of abuse or neglect in which children may be victims of multiple forms of maltreatment, 85 percent of the parents identified through child neglect reporting for lack of supervision were identified only for that problem.

Some researchers believe latchkey children may be "at risk" developmentally. In order to learn new behaviors,

children need consistent, frequent, and healthy interaction with warm affirming adults. Children who do not have frequent access to such adults may not learn the behaviors necessary for healthy development (Maier, 1982). The latchkey arrangement may, also, force responsibilities on children too young to cope (Elkind, 1983) and may deprive some children of the playtime with peers necessary for the development of social skills (Long & Long, 1983). In contrast, one of the few studies of children who have received center-based after school care found that the children in the program improved their grades in reading and math, increased their school attendance, made better grades in conduct, improved their attitudes toward authority, and increased their self-esteem (Entwisile, 1975).

National Response to the Problem

The national problem of unsupervised school-age children has become increasingly visible in recent months. ABC-TV's recent three hour program on American education, "To Save Our Schools", highlighted the problem of latchkey children by featuring the typical after-school day of three elementary school children in various parts of the country. The National Parent Teacher Association and the Florida Parent Teacher Association, the National School Boards Association, the American Bar Association, and the AFL-CIO have recently made strong public statements supporting school-age child care. In May 1984, the National Committee for the Prevention of Child

Abuse, the School-Age Child Care Project of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, and Wheelock College sponsored the "First National Conference on Latchkey Children". Among the topics discussed by the 150 participants and 65 speakers were the psychological and physical risks faced by unsupervised children, legal issues, and role of the public school. And, in November, 1984, policymakers from the public and private sectors met at Wingspread Center in Wisconsin to discuss the latchkey problems of young adolescents, 10-15, at a conference sponsored by the Center for Early Adolescence.

The recently adjourned Ninety-Eighth United States Congress enacted legislation encouraging the establishment of school-age child care programs. The legislation authorizes a two year, $20 million a year grant program. Sixty percent is available for latchkey programs and 40 percent is to establish dependent (both child and adult) care resource and referral programs. These programs now await funding authorization by the next Congress.

States' Initiatives

There is growing interest and concern in several states regarding school-age child care. In 1978, Connecticut pioneered this area with an innovative grant program that provided funding over a 3 year period for after school program development. A few key states -- California, New York, Wisconsin, and Maine are currently making school-age child care

a priority. California, for example, which has been in the forefront of day care innovation since the end of World War II has actively funded and integrated public and private resources to make day care and extended school day programs possible. The California Legislature is presently studying a proposed "cutting edge" comprehensive package on school-age child care that includes a 35 million dollar general fund appropriation. Wisconsin is currently hoping to use $500,000 for a "latchkey initiative" that would include a statewide RFP process.

In his 1983 State of the State message, New York Governor Mario M. Cuomo requested information and recommendations on latchkey children from the New York Council on Children and Families. This report is now complete; and, as a result, a project funded by the Division of Criminal Justice Service is about to begin that will design a statewide demonstration and technical assistance project. Oregon, Massachusetts, and Connecticut have recently passed legislation allowing the use of school buildings for students during non-school hours. And, the Texas Department of Human Resources has established an information sharing program for groups interested in starting programs.

III. THE STATUS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE IN FLORIDA

According to the most recent enrollment figures available, 653,688 children attended Florida's public schools, grades K-5, in the Fall of 1983. Using ABC-TV's estimate that one quarter of the elementary students are without care, approximately 138,500 children are probably going home to empty houses in Florida at the present time. This figure is projected to grow rapidly during the decade of the 1980s. The 1984 Governor's Report on the Florida Economy projects a population increase for the state of 29.5 percent in 1980-1990, growth from 9.6 million to 12.6 million. The Report projects that a larger proportion of this increase in population will be young black persons, putting a strain on community and state support for single and working parents.

Florida Statutes Related to School-Age Care

Existing Florida Statutes permit school boards to engage in a variety of activities related to providing school-age child care. There are no laws which seem to be acting as barriers to the establishment of programs. Florida Statutes address the use of buildings, leasing of facilities, and the use of buses as follows:

(1) Use of buildings and grounds is permitted by F.S. 235.02:

The School board, . . may permit the use of education facilities and grounds for any legal assembly or for community use... The board shall adopt rules necessary to protect educational facilities and grounds when used for such purposes.

(2) Leasing of facilities is permited under F.S. 235.056(1):

A board, . ., is authorized to lease educational plants to a federal, state, county, or municipal governmental agency or to any public nonprofit agency, for the benefit of the community, when such action is recommended in an educational plant survey.

(3) The use of school buses by non-profit organizations is authorized by F.S. 234.211(1)(b):

Each school district may enter into agreements with nonprofit corporations and nonprofit civic associations and groups to allow the use of school buses to transport school-age children for activities sponsored by such associations and groups, including, but not limited to, the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, the YMCA and similar groups.

The several Florida HRS Districts have given F.S. 402.302(5), relating to child care licensing, two different interpretations. The statute states:

"Child care facility" includes any child care center or child care arrangement which provides child care for more than five children. . . The following are not included: public schools and non-public schools which are in compliance with the Compulsory School Attendance Law, Chapter 232...

The problem arises when some HRS districts interpret this statute to mean school-based programs are exempt from licensing requirements and some districts construe the statute to mean exemption "only when school is in regular session". In districts which follow this latter interpretation, licensing is required before an after-school program is allowed to operate.

Extent of Local School Involvement

A survey was sent to all sixty-seven school superintendents in Florida to determine the extent of school district involvement in school-age child care. Nineteen school districts, twenty-eight percent, reported involvement in some form of school-age child care program. (See Table 1). These districts reporting programs were primarily clustered in the more densely populated areas of the state: the southern, west-

TABLE 1:

Florida School Districts Reporting School-Age Child Care Programs 1984-85 School Year

Alachua	N	Lake	Y
Baker	N	Lee	Y*
Bay	N	Leon	Y*
Bradford	N	Levy	N
Brevard	N	Liberty	N
Broward	Y*	Madison	N
Calhoun	N	Manatee	P*
Charlotte	P*	Marion	P
Citrus	N	Martin	Y
Clay	N	Monroe	Y*
Collier	P	Nassau	N
Columbia	N	Okaloosa	N
Dade	Y*	Okeechobee	N
DeSoto	N	Orange	Y*
Dixie	N	Osceola	N
Duval	Y*	Palm Beach	Y*
Escambia	N	Pasco	Y*
Flagler	Y	Pinellas	Y*
Franklin	P	Polk	D
Gadsden	N	Putnam	N
Gilchrist	N	St. Johns	Y
Glades	N	St. Lucie	N
Gulf	N	Santa Rosa	Y*
Hamilton	N	Sarasota	Y
Hardee	N	Seminole	N
Hendry	N	Sumter	N
Hernando	Y*	Suwannee	N
Highlands	N	Taylor	N
Hillsborough	Y	Union	N
Holmes	N	Volusia	Y*
Indian River	N	Wakulla	N
Jackson	N	Walton	N
Jefferson	N	Washington	N
Layfayette	N		

Y - Established program
N - No program
P - Program in planning stages
D - Program dropped/lack of interest
* - Districts reporting Needs Assessment

central, central, and northeastern areas. (See Figure 1.) The nineteen school districts which reported school-age child care programs were: Broward, Dade, Duval, Flagler, Hernando, Hillsborough, Lake, Lee, Leon, Martin, Monroe, Orange, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, St. Johns, Santa Rosa, and Sarasota and Volusia.

In addition, four districts; Charlotte, Collier, Franklin, and Manatee, reported they were seriously considering starting a program in the near future. One district, Polk, reported having started a program, but dropping it after time due to lack of participation. Data from the school districts is summarized in Table 2.

Models of Program Delivery

School-age child care programs seem to be "grass roots" efforts, established to meet a definite need or demand in a particular area. Because of this independent history, each district's program tends to be unique, reflecting that particular community's needs and the resources available locally.

However, three broad patterns seem to emerge from the survey data. The first pattern, or program model, is school-age child care established and run by each individual school

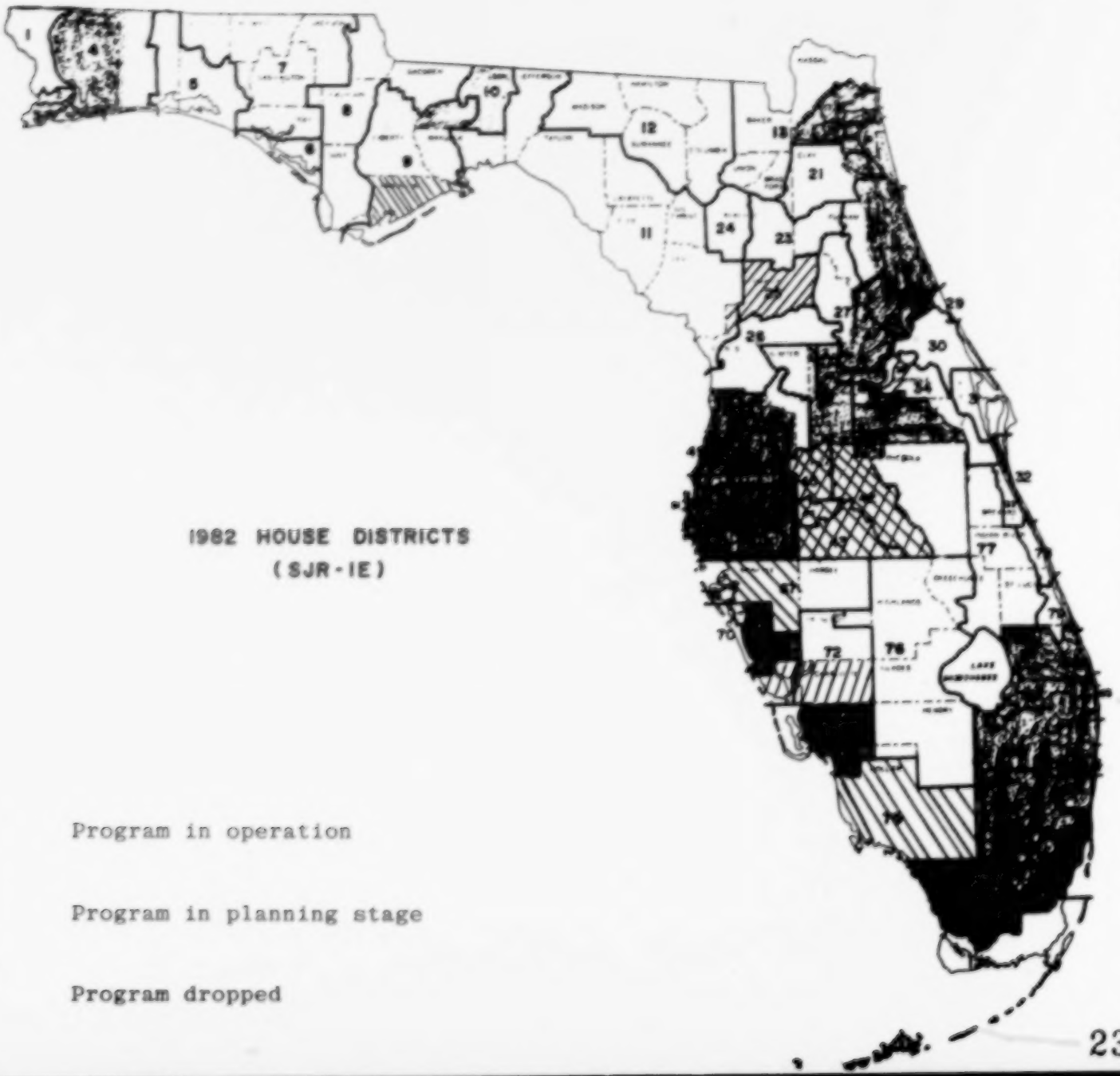

FIGURE 1: DISTRICTS INVOLVED IN SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

TABLE 2:

Summary of School-Age Child Care Services
Provided by Florida School Districts 1984-85

District	Program Model	Scope of Program	Financial Support and Fees	Estimated Cost to District	Transportation	License Required	Other Latchkey Services	Future Plans
Broward	Community School	5 schools 80 students After school	Tuition	None	No	No		Expand as needed
Dade	Mixed: Community school YMCA YWCA	130 schools 8,462 students Before school After school Planning days	Sliding scale fees Title XX $15/wk.	Must be self-supporting	No	Yes	Self-care course	Expand as needed
Duval	Community School	12 schools 1,117 students Before school After school	Tuition $1.50-10/wk. depending on site & service	Must be self-supporting	No	Yes		Expand as needed
Hernando	Contract: YMCA	Before school After school Planning days Holidays Summer	Sliding scale fees	None	No	No	24 hr. "Hot Line"	In all elem. schools by '85-'86
Hillsborough	Contract: YMCA	13 schools 414 students After school Planning days Holidays Summer	Sliding scale fees United Way Jr. League Private Found.	None	No	Yes	"Phone-friend" Scout Self-Care Book	None at this time
Flagler	Community School	2 schools After school	Tuition	Minimal	Yes	No		None at this time

Lake	District	Before school	District funds				None at this time
Lee	Contract: Lee Co. Child Care	1 school 101 students After school Holidays Summer	Title XX	None	Yes	Yes	None at this time
Leon	Community School	8 schools 400 students Before school After School Planning days	Tuition Title XX $84/6 wks.	Must be self-supporting	No	No	Expand as needed
Martin	Contract: YMCA	Before school After school Planning days			No		
Monroe	Mixed: Community school YMCA	2 schools 531 students Before school After school Holidays	Tuition Community donations	$6,000 transportation	Yes	No	Enrichment program 1-3 days/wk. "Help Line"	Expand as needed
Orange	Community School	14 schools 900 students Before school After school Planning days Holidays	Tuition	Cost of facility usage	No	No	"Caring Connection" phone service	Begin summer program
Palm Beach	Community School	14 schools 8,000 students Before school After school	Tuition Title XX $8-15/wk.	No direct cost	Yes	No	"Crisis" & "Homework" phone service	Expand as needed
Pasco	Contract: Latchkey, Inc.	1 school 68 students Before school After school Planning days	Sliding scale fee Title XX United Way	No direct cost	No	Yes		Add school January '85

Pinellas	Mixed: Community school Latchkey, Inc. YMCA Rec. Dept.	13 schools 1000 students Before school After school Planning days	Sliding scale fees Title XX Juvenile Welfare Bd.	Depre-ciation	No	Yes	"Block homes"	Develop area cluster plan
St. Johns	YMCA at YMCA site	10 schools 400 students After school	Tuition United Way Private donations	None	Yes	No		New "Y" complex planned
Santa Rosa	Community School	2 schools 19 students After school Summer	Sliding scale fees Title XX Up to $16.50	Must be self-sup-porting	Yes	Yes		Add planning day
Sarasota	Mixed: Community school YMCA District-Magnet School	7 schools 550 students After school	Sliding scale fees District funds	$300,000 for mag-net school	No	No	"Warm Line"	None at this time
Volusia	Contract: YMCA, United Child Care	3 schools 86 students	Tuition Sliding scale fees	Minimal	Yes	Yes		Add additional schools

through the community education program. The community education program is funded by the State through the Department of Education and enables those school districts which apply for funds to designate one or more schools as "Community Schools". Currently, 50 Florida school districts receive Community Education funds. The objective of a community school program is to involve the school in the life of the community through adult activities, educational courses and other programs to meet the particular needs of that community. In several areas one pressing community need has been school-age child care. The community school is involved in school-age child care in fifty-eight percent of the districts reporting programs--in seven districts as the only provider of service and in three districts providing service at some schools while another agency (such as YMCA) offers care at additional schools.

A second model of program delivery is contracting with a local children's service agency for use of the school facilities in return for the establishment of a program to serve that school's latchkey children. Seven districts currently use contracting exclusively to provide their programs and others use it as part of a mixed delivery system with community school programs. The most common agency involved in contracting for child care is the YMCA which is responsible for programs in eight districts. Latchkey, Inc., the largest private non-profit agency providing school-age child care in the nation, serves in two counties, and one district contracts

with the county's Title XX (Subsidized Child Care) agency to supply all of the school-age child care at the schools. Contractual arrangements between agencies and school districts vary. At least one district provides the school facilities free of charge, while others charge varied amounts for rent, utilities, and maintenance.

A third model is the "mixed delivery" system. This model truly reflects the "grass roots" character of school-age child care programs in Florida. Each school has responded to its needs individually, reaching unique solutions according to the resources available. Five districts participate in this mixed delivery system of services. The most common pattern is for the community school to provide the programs in some schools and for other schools in the district to contract with an agency such as Latchkey, Inc. or the YMCA for services.

Additional Services

Several school districts are either providing or cooperating with other agencies to provide several additional services for children who are alone after school. Five counties have a "hot line" available to children during after school hours and two more are making plans to establish this service. Several of these phone programs make daily calls to the children to check on their safety and comfort. One district reports the availability of a "self-care course" for

children; one district distributes a self-care booklet provided by the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; and in one area, "Block Homes" have been designated to provide security during after-school hours.

Scope of Programs

Although one school district's program operates just before school (meeting special local needs) the rest of the programs all provide after-school care from the time school is dismissed until 5:00 or 6:00 pm. The after-school programs are individually planned at each school site; but almost all consist of a snack, followed by both structured and unstructured activities. Many programs offer instruction in such enrichment areas as music, art and crafts, sports, games, and even foreign languages. Some programs provide time and space for doing homework.

Ten programs also provide before school supervision. Seven of the districts provide programs on teacher planning days and school holidays as well, and five of the districts have all day summer programs.

The programs vary in size by district. The smallest district program involves one school and nineteen students, while the largest includes 130 schools with 8,462 students participating. Based on the 15 districts which reported

student data, more than 21,736 students across the state are involved in school-age child care in at least 239 different school centers. Interestingly, there are about as many older (third to fifth graders) involved in the programs as younger (kindergarten to second grade). In no district reporting does every elementary school participate in a school-age child care program. Seemingly, a school becomes involved in a program only when such program is necessary to meet the particular needs and demands of the school's students and parents.

According to data reported by 12 districts, 1,149 staff members are involved in school-age child care in those districts. Only three percent of the staff work full time or all day in the program; the rest of the staff is part-time during the after-school hours. Nine percent of the staff are teachers with Florida certification. Two of the districts make extensive use of volunteers in their programs.

Financial Support

Almost all of the districts require their school-age child care programs to be self-supporting and report no extra costs incurred due to providing the service. The only exception is one district which supports an after-school program at one school with district funds as part of a "magnet school" concept. In most districts parents assume the full cost of the program through payment of fees. Eight districts

have a sliding fee scale based on family income. Nine districts provide places for students eligible for Title XX (Subsidized Child Care) funding for low-income families, and one district's program is entirely Title XX supported. Four district programs receive help from United Way and county agencies, and three receive donations from private foundations and individuals. Based on fee data from 6 districts, fees range from a low of $8.00 per week to a high of $22.00 per week. The average reported fee was $13.25 a week for after-school care.

Licensing

Interpretation of the requirement for licensing of school-based programs varies from one HRS district to another. However, licensing does not seem to be a major problem for schools when it is required or a barrier to the establishment of programs. If a district has a concern regarding licensing, it is usually related to the requirement for a fenced play area.

Future Plans

Eighty percent of the survey respondents projected a much greater need for school-based services by 1990, and the response to the program in all districts where one has been established is positive. At least seventy-five percent of the

established programs have definite plans for expanding services to meet a growing demand. One Assistant Superintendent reports, "The only problem we have is with parents who want to transfer their children to schools with a Latchkey program."

Although a number of successful programs are operating, they are not beginning to meet the demand in some areas. A survey conducted by one district in 1980 revealed that fifteen percent of the district's elementary children cared for themselves after school. Sixteen percent were cared for by older siblings, and forty-two percent of the parents responding to the survey requested an after-school program. A survey respondent from one district writes, "It is estimated that fifty percent of the children in our district go home alone." Another states, "Less than twenty percent of our needs are being met because of Title XV funding limitations."

Needs and Concerns

Transportation for after-school programs was reported by several districts as being a concern. Currently, seven programs provide some kind of transportation from schools without programs to program sites. In four of these districts the school board assumes the cost of transportation, and in three the YMCA reimburses the schools. Several districts mentioned funding for transportation as a major need of their program.

Another major need mentioned frequently was funding to supplement sliding scale fees and help for low-income children who "fall between the cracks"--those children who are not eligible for subsidized child care, Title XX funding but whose parents cannot afford the after-school program's fees. When school districts were asked what services the state could provide school-age programs, sixty-eight percent responded start-up funds, fifty-four percent requested more Title XX funding, fifty-one percent wanted a clearinghouse to provide information, and forty-six felt that establishment of state standards would be helpful.

IV. STATE POLICY ON SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE: BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS

Approximately, 75% of the parents surveyed in a national study of child care consumers in 1979 said that every community should have "supervised recreational programs" available to children during after-school hours. Close to 60% to the respondents of the same national survey felt that the public schools should provide these programs. While many of these concerned citizens would enthusiastically support state involvement in the latchkey problem, others feel a child's after school hours are the responsibility of the parents only. Both sides of the issue must be considered in developing policies relating to school-age child care.

Benefits of Enchancing State Policy Related to School Age Child Care

Many members of the public point out that since extended day programs depend on state sanctions within their education policies, state government is already involved in the issue. When states get involved with day care, they are not forming family policy; they are responding to the economic and social factors that are a part of the realities of the 1980's. (Clark, J., 1982, States Information Center, The Council of State Governments.) Other arguments for state involvement include:

- School-age child care is primary prevention for the physical, psychological, and deliquency risks of latchkey children--problems which can require even greater state involvement and expense.

- By relieving the latchkey stress of children and their families, school-age child care provides the support to strengthen the primary role of the family and makes the family's time together more relaxed and meaningful.

- School-age child care can involve the full local community through business and industry sponsorship and non-profit agency involvement.

- School-age child care provides a community service which may contribute to improved relations between parents and the school, and between the community and school.

- Many children find an extended school day program fills the need for interaction with peers and affirming adults required for healthy development.

- School-age child care can create revenue for the schools and be an effective use of surplus space.

- After-school programs serve as a deterrent to vandalism by reducing the time a building is unoccupied and eliminating children "hanging around" unsupervised during after-school hours.

In the Florida Survey, a number of districts expressed enthusiasm for programs which provided for school-age child care. The following comments were reported:

"There is a real need for affordable care for the low income inner city child."

"It is only reasonable that facilities and resources be made available."

"A great need exists for such a program with more working mothers and more single parents by the year 1988."

Those districts which have established programs seem to have overcome the problems of operation and any objections from the public. Districts with programs report them growing rapidly in scope "due to popular demand". Several districts

have discovered the potential of extended day programs to serve as a "magnet" to attract pupils to certain schools. The popularity of school-age child care with parents who need after-school supervision for their children increases the attractiveness of those schools which offer these programs. An Assistant Superintendent reports, "In fact, one problem confronting schools is that parents request special permits to attend out-of-zone schools to participate in Latchkey Programs sometimes resulting in overcrowding at schools providing the program".

Problems with State Involvement in School-Age Child Care

Arguments against state involvement in school-based child care fall into three categories (1) resistant attitudes, (2) problems of operation, and (3) inadequacy of school policy. These argumements include:

- Day care "enrichment" programs are a luxury, not a necessity. If parents want enrichment and extra-curricular activity, then it is their responsibility to provide it.

- These programs devalue the role of the family by allowing strangers to raise the children.

- School-age child care is a local issue and is the responsibility of parents and local communities, not the state.

- Schools are burdened enough without having the added responsibilities, tasks, and expenses from additional programs.

- Problems may arise when guidelines and procedures for the development of school policy are unclear.

- Extended day programs may be either too custodial or too academic to be appropriate for school-aged children.

- The liability, insurance, and legal risks of extended day programs are not well-defined.

Several Florida districts, especially those located in rural areas, communicated concern about school-age child care programs in their responses to the recent survey. Two strong feelings expressed were:

> "I feel this would be one more burden that school systems should not be asked to carry."

"We do not believe this is an appropriate additional function of the public schools."

Some private day care centers have expressed concern about what they see as unfair competition from public schools. In the superintendents' survey, several districts expressed the desire that after-school programs not be seen as in competition with private operators.

Recommendations for State Policymakers

The task facing Florida, if the issue of latchkey children is to be addressed, is to provide a stronger overall framework of support for local efforts to involve children in healthy activities under adult supervision during non-school hours. In addition, local communities need help and encouragement in setting up their programs. The following recommendations have evolved from national studies and from data collected on the state survey conducted by the Education, K-12 Committee Staff.

- State policy should continue to endorse a diversity of program models and local options for establishing school-age child care.

- Specific language authorizing and encouraging local initiative in the establishment of school-age child care programs should be added to:

F.S. 235.02 - Use of School Buildings

F.S. 235.056 - Leasing of School Facilities

F.S. 228.071 - Community Education (community schools)

F.S. 234.211 and 236.083 - School Transportation

- The licensing issue should be addressed. The perception of unfair competition with private day care facilities could be mitigated by removing the possible exemption for school-based child care from F.S. 402.302 (child care licensing). Separate day care licensing standards more appropriate for school-age children should be established. These standards should apply uniformly to all school-based, public, or private programs serving school-age children.

- An interagency School-Age Child Care Information Exchange or Clearinghouse representing the Departments of Education and Health and Rehabilitative Services should be established to provide leadership, assistance, and monitoring services to school-age child care programs.

- The state should study the possibilities for creating a single, easily-accessed source of start-up funds for new programs.

- The state should encourage new programs to offer a sliding fee scale for parents. In conjunction with this, programs that utilize existing space and do not require the purchase of expensive equipment should be encouraged.

- The state should study alternative methods of funding school-age child care for low and low-middle income children.

- The state should study the school transportation funding formula to determine alternative methods of providing transportation for users of school-age child care.

or

The Department of Education's Division of Public Schools should be authorized to establish a Clearinghouse for School-Age Child Care Programs to provide leadership, assistance, and monitoring services and to cooperate with HRS on matters relating to licensing and Title XX (Subsidized Child Care) funding.

or

The state should encourage a non-profit child advocacy group to establish a Clearinghouse to provide leadership, information, and monitoring services to school-age child care programs and to facilitate the cooperation between various agencies and groups concerned with school-age child care. This Clearinghouse could be funded through a competitive grant process.

- The State should encourage local child care needs assessment efforts, with the School-Age Child Care Clearinghouse providing technical assistance to communities in designing, conducting, and analyzing data resulting from surveys and other data collection efforts.

- The School-Age Child Care Clearinghouse should undertake a systematic effort to educate the public and school

administrators about the need for more after-school programs and the importance of the schools' cooperation in this regard.

- The School-Age Child Care Clearinghouse should examine the question of what guidelines should be offered to help ensure quality of care in after-school programs operated by or in the schools.

- The School-Age Child Care Clearinghouse should produce and disseminate a detailed manual for parents and community groups to serve as a technical guide to developing school-age child care services.

- The School-Age Child Care Clearinghouse should make available technical assistance to communities interested in conducting local conferences/workshops to plan school-age child care within that community.

- The School-Age Child Care Clearinghouse should foster a training network to facilitate greater exchange of proven effective program strategies from one community to another.

- The School-Age Child Care Clearinghouse should encourage and support research on the effects of school-age child care on children's development and the effects of prolonged periods of self-care on young children.

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APPENDIX

Relevant Florida Statutes

[1]235.02 Use of buildings and grounds.—The board, including the Board of Regents, may permit the use of educational facilities and grounds for any legal assembly or for community use centers or may permit the same to be used as voting places in any primary, regular, or special election. The board shall adopt rules necessary to protect educational facilities and grounds when used for such purposes.

History.—s. 902, ch. 18355, 1939; CGL 1940 Supp. 892(286); s. 105, ch. 65-239; s. 1, ch. 69-300; s. 5, ch. 77-456; s. 9, ch. 80-414; ss. 50, 52, ch. 81-223.

[1]Note.—Repealed effective July 1, 1985, by s. 52, ch. 81-223; s. 52 is subject to review by the Legislature prior to that date.

[1]235.056 Lease and lease-purchase of educational facilities.—

(1) A board, including the Board of Regents, is authorized to lease educational plants to a federal, state, county, or municipal governmental agency or to any public nonprofit agency, for the benefit of the community, when such action is recommended in an educational plant survey.

(2) A school board may lease, for any educational purposes, any land owned by it to any person or entity for such term, for such rent, and upon such terms and conditions as the school board determines to be in its best interests; any such lease may provide for the optional or binding purchase of the land by the lessee for its fair market value determined in a manner prescribed by State Board of Education rule and upon such terms and conditions as the school board determines are in its best interests. A determination that any such land so leased is unnecessary for educational purposes is not a prerequisite to the leasing or lease-purchase of such land. Prior to entering into or executing any such lease, a school board shall hold an open, public hearing on the proposal of entering into the lease or lease-purchase agreement, at which hearing a copy of the proposed agreement in its final form shall be available for inspection and review by the public, after due notice as required by law.

(3) A board, including the Board of Regents, is authorized to rent, lease, or lease-purchase facilities. Facilities rented or leased for 1 year or less are not required to be approved by the office and must be funded through the operations budget. Prior to facilities being leased, rented, or lease-purchased for a period of more than 1 year, such facilities shall be approved by the office; and any available funds may be authorized to be expended for such purposes.

History.—ss. 10, 52, ch. 81-223; s. 2, ch. 83-224.

[1]Note.—Expires July 1, 1985, pursuant to s. 52, ch. 81-223; s. 52 is subject to review by the Legislature prior to that date.

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234.211 Use of school buses for public purposes.—

(1)(a) Each school district may enter into agreements with the governing body of a county or municipality in the school district or any state agency or agencies established or identified to assist the transportation disadvantaged, as defined in s. 427.011, including the elderly, pursuant to Pub. L. No. 89-73, as amended, for the use of the school buses of the school district by departments, boards, commissions, or officers of such county or municipality or of the state for county, municipal, or state purposes, including transportation of such transportation disadvantaged. Each such agreement shall provide for reimbursement of the school district, in full or in part, for the proportionate share of fixed and operating costs incurred by the school district attributable to the use of such buses pursuant to such agreement.

(b) Each school district may enter into agreements with nonprofit corporations and nonprofit civic associations and groups to allow the use of school buses to transport school-age children for activities sponsored by such associations and groups, including, but not limited to, the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, the Y.M.C.A., and similar groups. Use of school buses for such activities shall be pursuant to rules adopted by the school district and with compensation to the school board at least equal to the costs incurred by the board for such use.

(2)(a) The governing body or state agency or agencies established or identified pursuant to Pub. L. No. 89-73, or the nonprofit corporation or nonprofit civic organization or group, shall indemnify and hold harmless the school district from any and all liability of the school district by virtue of the use of such buses pursuant to an agreement authorized by this section.

(b) Corporations not for profit, established or identified pursuant to Pub. L. No. 89-73, as amended, and providing transportation services for the transportation disadvantaged without compensation; nonprofit corporations; and nonprofit civic organizations and groups shall provide liability insurance coverage in the amounts specified in s. 234.03.

(3) When such buses are used for nonschool purposes other than the transportation of the transportation disadvantaged, the flashing red lights shall not be used, and the "School Bus" inscription on the front and rear of such buses shall be covered or con-

228.071 Community education.—

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Florida Community Education Act."

(2) PURPOSE.—Community education promotes a more efficient use of schools and other community facilities through an extension of personnel, buildings, and equipment. The purpose of this section is to provide state leadership and financial support to encourage and assist school boards, the Board of Trustees of the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, and other governmental or nongovernmental agencies in the establishment and maintenance of community education.

(3) DEFINITIONS.—The following terms, wherever used or referred to in this section, have the following meanings:

(a) "Community education" means:

1. The process in which a school or other public or available facility is utilized as a community center operated in conjunction with educational, recreational, social, civic, cultural, health, and other public, private, and governmental organizations and agencies to provide educational, recreational, social, cultural, health, and community services for persons of all ages in the community in accordance with the needs, interests, and concerns of that community. Community education includes, but is not limited to, maximum utilization of human, physical, and financial resources of a community in providing learning experiences and services for community members of all ages, systematic involvement of representative community members in the identification of needs and community involvement in suggesting or implementing organizational structures to meet these identified needs, and interagency coordination and cooperation; and

2. The composite of those activities and services described in a grant application of a board pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education.

(b) "Community education coordinator" means that person who is employed by a board on a full-time basis to promote, organize, coordinate, and direct community education.

(c) "Board" means a district school board or the Board of Trustees of the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.

(d) "Department" means the Department of Education.

(e) "Operational funds" means funds appropriated to provide a coordinator or director with supplies, materials, and part-time clerical assistance as provided by rules of the State Board of Education.

(4) COMMUNITY EDUCATION GRANT.—Pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education, each school board and the Board of Trustees for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind may submit to the department a request for a community education grant. A board applying for a grant shall include in its grant application a description of its community education process. The board shall give priority to centers serving the maximum number of persons within the limits of resources available and to programs which will allow for matching funds or for joint funding from the Federal Government or other public or private sources and which may be efficiently and effectively developed in conjunction with community education.

(5) COMMUNITY EDUCATION GRANTS.—

(a) For those grant applications approved for funding, the department shall authorize distribution of a community education grant not to exceed one-half of the total compensation of each person employed as a community education coordinator on a full-time basis by a board during the fiscal year for which a community education grant is authorized.

(b) Pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education, the department shall authorize distribution of operational funds.

(6) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The department is authorized to provide such technical assistance as is necessary to develop and maintain community education. The department may use its own staff or such consultants as may be necessary to accomplish this purpose.

(7) RECOMMENDATIONS BY COMMISSIONER.—The Commissioner of Education shall recommend the level of funding for community education each fiscal year and make any other recommendations or reports as he deems necessary or as required by rules of the State Board of Education.

(8) BUDGET.—The department shall include in its legislative budget funds necessary to implement this section.

(9) USE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY.—The buildings, land, equipment, and other property owned by a board may be used by the providers of community education on a shared or leased basis.

(10) JOINT PROPERTY.—A board, jointly with other governmental bodies, may acquire, own, maintain, and dispose of real and personal property for use in community education.

(11) JOINT AGREEMENTS.—District school boards and community college boards of trustees are authorized to submit joint grant applications, if an agreement between the boards is established. Such application shall be considered as a single grant application. For those grant applications approved for funding, the district school board is authorized to transfer all or part of such funds to the community college as specified in the contractual agreement.

History.—ss. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, ch. 70-318; s. 1, ch. 70-439; s. 1, ch. 72-221; s. 16, ch. 73-330; ss. 1, 2, ch. 74-384; s. 16, ch. 75-286; s. 10, ch. 76-223; s. 1, ch. 79-242; ss. 12, 16, ch. 79-300; s. 7, ch. 80-378; s. 1, ch. 83-325.

Note.—Former s. 228.162.

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236.083 Funds for student transportation.—The annual allocation to each district for transportation to the public schools of students in kindergarten through grade 12 and exceptional students shall be determined as follows:

(1) Subject to the rules of the state board, each district shall determine the membership of students who are transported:

(a) By reason of living 2 miles or more from school;

(b) By reason of being physically handicapped, regardless of distance to school;

(c) By reason of being vocational and exceptional students transported from one school center to another; and

(d) With respect to elementary school students whose grade level does not exceed grade 6, by reason of being subjected to hazardous walking conditions en route to or from school as provided in s. 234.021. Such rules shall, when appropriate, provide for the determination of membership under this paragraph for less than 1 year to accommodate the needs of students who require transportation only until such hazardous conditions are corrected.

(2) Subject to the regulation of the state board, each district shall determine and report one-half of the round-trip route mileage required to transport students to and from school and one-half of the round-trip mileage on routes between school centers required to transport exceptional students and vocational students to and from centers where appropriate programs are provided. One-half of the round-trip route mileage shall be computed by adding:

(a) The loaded miles of each school bus route as designated in accordance with s. 234.061 and served by a bus as defined by regulations of the state board, except that miles traveled for a side route to pick up students living within 1½ miles of the main trunk route and miles traveled to transport students to evening schools and enrichment programs shall not be added; and

(b) Fifty percent of the miles of the bus route traveled without students.

(3) A density index for each district shall be computed by the department annually by dividing the membership of transported students as determined in subsection (1) by the bus route mileage as determined in subsection (2).

(4) The allocation for each district for a 180-day school term shall be calculated in accordance with the following formula:

$$\text{Allowable per-student cost} = \frac{386.2385}{\text{the density index of the district}} + 42.50283$$

except that the districts with a density index of 1.70 students per route mile or less will be computed as having a density index of 1.70, and districts with a density index of 4.70 or more students per route mile will be counted as having a density index of 4.70. This formula shall be recomputed annually by the Department of Education on the basis of the latest available data and submitted annually to the Legislature prior to the convening of the regular annual session. The allocation to each district for transportation shall be determined by multiplying the allowable per-student cost by the membership of all students who are transported as determined in subsection (1).

(5) If a district operates schools more or less than 180 days, the allocation per student for transportation to such schools shall be calculated by multiplying the quotient of the days the schools operate divided by 180 days times the allocation per student determined in subsection (4). The allocation for each district for transportation of students in membership more or less than 180 days shall be determined by multiplying the allowable cost per student determined in this subsection by the membership of such students who are transported.

(6) When authorized by rules of the state board, an allocation of the maximum amount specified in 112.061(7) per mile shall be allowed for miles traveled by passenger cars providing for transportation of isolated students.

(7) The total allocation to each district for transportation of students shall be the sum of the amounts determined in subsections (4), (5), (6), and (10). If the funds appropriated for the purpose of implementing this section are not sufficient to pay the requirements in full, the Department of Education shall prorate the available funds on a percentage basis.

(8) No district shall use funds to purchase transportation equipment and supplies at prices which exceed those determined by the department to be the lowest which can be obtained, as prescribed in 229.79.

(9) Pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education, a district school board may submit to the Commissioner of Education a proposed plan to use school buses on a pilot-project basis for the conveyance of the elderly or the physically or mentally handicapped. A pilot project shall be developed in the following manner:

(a) The superintendent of any school district wishing to participate shall prepare an itemized statement of the estimated total cost of the pilot project and a copy of the resolution of the school board indicating its intention to provide at least one-fourth of the total cost of the project, either directly or through the use of federal funds or other public or private resources. The school board may impose fares for the transportation services provided through the pilot project. Any school district proposing to establish a pilot project shall plan cooperatively with other institutions, agencies, and organizations in the district which provide or are in need of transportation services for the elderly or the physically or mentally handicapped.

(b) The commissioner shall review and approve, disapprove, or resubmit to the school board for modification each proposed plan. For the 1978-1979 fiscal year, the commissioner shall approve pilot projects in up to five school districts and shall authorize distribution of funds in an amount not to exceed three-fourths of the total cost of the proposed pilot projects.

(10) Funds allocated or apportioned for the payment of student transportation services may be used to pay local general purpose transportation systems for transportation of students to and from school. Subject to the rules of the State Board of Education, each school district shall determine and report the number of assigned students using general purpose transportation to transport students to school for the first time on any school day and the one-way miles on routes between school centers required to transport exceptional students and vocational students to centers where appropriate programs are provided. The allocation to each district for such transportation shall be determined by multiplying the allowable cost per student by the membership of students who are transported by general purpose transportation. The allowable cost per student shall be equal to the round-trip fare charged by the general purpose transportation system or the allowable cost per student riding a school bus, whichever is less.

History.—s. 6, ch. 73-345; s. 4, ch. 74-327; ss. 12, 14, ch. 75-284; s. 3, ch. 76-104; s. 1, ch. 78-128; s. 3, ch. 80-284.

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'402.301 **Child care facilities; legislative intent and declaration of purpose and policy.**—It is the legislative intent to protect the health, safety, and well-being of the children of the state. Toward that end, it is the purpose of this act to establish statewide minimum standards for the care and protection of children in child care facilities, to ensure maintenance of these standards, and to approve county administration and enforcement to regulate conditions in such facilities through a program of licensing. It shall be the policy of the state to ensure protection of children under care in child care facilities and to encourage and assist in the improvement of child care programs. It is the further legislative intent that the freedom of religion of all citizens shall be inviolate. Nothing in this act shall give any governmental agency jurisdiction or authority to regulate, supervise or in any way be involved in any Sunday School, Sabbath School, religious services, or any nursery service or other program conducted during religious or church services primarily for the convenience of those attending such services.

History.—s. 1, ch. 74-113; s. 3, ch. 78-168; s. 1, ch. 77-457; ss. 2, 3, ch. 81-318; ss. 6, 7, ch. 83-248.

'Note.—Repealed effective October 1, 1993, by s. 7, ch. 83-248, and scheduled for review pursuant to s. 11.61 in advance of that date.

'402.302 **Definitions.**—As used in this act:

(1) "Department" means the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

(2) "Secretary" means the secretary of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

(3) "Child care" means the care, protection, and supervision of a child for a period of less than 24 hours a day on a regular basis which supplements for the child, in accordance with his individual needs, daily care, enrichment opportunities, and health supervision and for which a payment, fee, or grant is made for care.

(4) "Child care facility" includes any child care center or child care arrangement which provides child care for more than five children unrelated to the operator and which receives a payment, fee, or grant for any of the children receiving care, wherever operated, and whether or not operated for profit. The following are not included: public schools and nonpublic schools which are in compliance with the Compulsory School Attendance Law, chapter 232; summer camps having children in full-time residence; summer day camps; and Bible Schools normally conducted during vacation periods.

(5) "Family day care home" means an occupied residence in which day care is regularly provided for no more than five preschool children and elementary school children from more than one unrelated family, including preschool children living in the home and preschool children received for day care who are related to the resident caregiver. Elementary school siblings of the preschool children received for day care may also be cared for outside of school hours provided the total number of children, including the caregiver's own and those related to her, does not exceed 10.

(6) "Operator" means any person ultimately responsible for the overall operation and administration of a child care facility, whether or not he is the owner.

(7) "Local licensing agency" means any agency or individual designated by the county to license child care facilities.

History.—s. 2, ch. 74-113; s. 3, ch. 78-168; s. 1, ch. 77-457; ss. 2, 3, ch. 81-318; ss. 6, 7, ch. 83-248.

'Note.—Repealed effective October 1, 1993, by s. 7, ch. 83-248, and scheduled for review pursuant to s. 11.61 in advance of that date.

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